

ONLY someone very shy of the word "genius" could withhold it from Oleg Popov of the Moscow State Circus, who is recognizable even in the inhuman spaces of the Harringay Arena as one of the great actor-clowns.

Popov himself dislikes these dark distances, for his style was formed in the light-flooded arenas (there are fifty-four of them on the Circus's home-circuit) where the audience numbers 1,200 at most and the clown can pick his laughs as a gardener picks his peaches. And, although Popov is a master



OLEG POPOV

of the speaking silence, there is something else that he misses: "I like to talk to you, too," he told me, "though of course I wouldn't know how to, here."

The Complete Performer

As juggler, acrobat, wire-walker, crackpot musician and classical clown Popov is the equal of anyone that we are likely to see. He is so perfect in these fields that he never needs to force our attention, and it is by the discreetest magic that he distracts us from the mammoth engineering operations that, as often as not, accompany his act. And to his separate skills there is added the actor's art—that of mingling a stab of pain with the other, hilarious tears that he wrenches so casually from us.

These things conceal endless contrivance: his costume, for instance, took four years to perfect, and only six months ago did he discard his trunkful of alternative costumes in favour of shirt and all-purpose trousers and four cloth caps. Already (he is well under thirty) he has a paternal approach to his art: how was it possible, he asked, that Chaplin and Danny Kaye were not training their successors? Nor is he vain: compliments bring a frown of anguish to his blanched maleable features, and what he craves is criticism: precise, unsparring, informed. "People must help me to get better. Altogether it was a good thing

when the fifteen-year-old Pravda apprentice left the select circle of acrobats and went, full-time, to the State Circus School.

Australiana

BEHIND the imposing horns of the new U.K. High Commissioner in Australia there lurks a taste for adventure. This found ample outlet in September, 1944, when, as Captain John Carrington, Grenadier Guards, he held the bridge at Nijmegen single-handed in his tank at a time when the enemy was threatening to cut off his troop from their fellows on the other side of the river. (A flair for adventure may also be detected in Lady Carrington's family: her father, Sir Francis McLean, was the first man to fly under Tower Bridge.)

In going to Australia, Lord Carrington reverts to family tradition, in that his great-uncle was Governor of New South Wales in the 1880s, his grandmother was born there, and his father was educated at Melbourne Grammar School. He himself, I understand, will be taking his three young children with him.

Butterfly Tummy

SOME weeks ago Miss Siriol Hulse-Jones suggested, in THE SUNDAY TIMES that there must be a German compound-noun for certain forms of holiday-anxiety.

My colleague Antony Terry, well placed in Bonn to carry out field-work in the matter has come back with the word "Unterwusstelnsvorurteilsaufenthaltswohnraumbeschäftigungsfühl." This is the help to persuade THE SUNDAY TIMES that he was "capable of good work, in spite of my appearance and vexatious habits."

Still Afloat

THE latest casualty among small publishers is the firm of MacGibbon & Kee which, after soldering gallantly on since 1949, has just been bought by Mr. Howard Samuel.

Mr. James MacGibbon has been connected with publishing for nearly thirty years (he joined Putnam's in 1929—"The book before they brought out 'All Quiet on the Western Front'—not a bad moment to go into publishing"), and now, discouraged by his seven years' struggle, he is joining a famous literary agents'.

He mentioned one publisher's problem that I'd not heard stressed before. With £900

as the normal investment in any first book, publishers naturally hope that a young author will turn in his work with the regularity of a Hugh Walpole or an Arnold Bennett. But it's there, Mr. MacGibbon tells me, that the shoe pinches hardest for a (new) publisher. "They simply don't do it," he said. "You have to wait four or five years for a second book nowadays, and by that time you have to launch them all over again."

As an agent, he feels, he'll have more time to get on their tails.

A Word From Max

August 13, 1947.

Dear Mr. Glass,

I am greatly pleased and touched by your very kind and delightful letter. Ever so many thanks. And be assured that I had great enjoyment in the presence of such a man as you—a man so very unmistakably an artist in every fibre.

But as for your idea of coming all that vast distance again because you want to see a greater number of smiles for the camera—no, really, you must do nothing of the kind. I am sure that your presentments of me are good and true—all the better and truer because I am "very serious underneath" (and indeed did my best to look so whenever the lights were about to flash).

I would of course like to see some proofs—for my own pleasure, and for my wife's.

Meanwhile, with great regard,

Yours sincerely,

Max Benham.

Douglas Glass showed this letter to the Literary Editor of THE SUNDAY TIMES. It was the only reference he possessed in the matter. He thought it might help to persuade THE SUNDAY TIMES that he was "capable of good work, in spite of my appearance and vexatious habits."

So began the long and valued association between Douglas Glass and THE SUNDAY TIMES.

Crabbwise

IN the late summer of this year Macmillan's are to publish "Commander Crabb," a personal account of the frog-man's activities in the Mediterranean and elsewhere during the war. Running through a rough proof of the book (which was based on matter dictated last year by Commander Crabb) I find that its author, Mr. Marshall Pugh, has encouraging news for those who would like to do daring things but have never quite had occasion to set about them.

"In November, 1942" (I quote from the opening of Chapter 1),

"when Lionel Philip Kenneth Crabb was drawn into the battle against Italian frogmen, he was thirty-two years old, opposed to any form of exercise and capable of swimming only three lengths of a swimming-pool."

Nor did his pre-war activities augur well in the business. When invited to take a newspaper interest in swimming (then newly invented) he was bored, his

biographer tells us, "by the sight of a grown woman splashing about in the water, looking like an anxious seal, and when it was suggested he should try the fins he excused himself and slipped quietly away."

A New Museum

FOR those whose thoughts turn to Hampstead Heath on fine Sunday afternoons I

propose a new objective: the discreetest and most recently opened of London's museums.

Fenton House is on the edge of the Heath, not far from White Stone Pond. A William-and-Mary house of exemplary style, it was lately bequeathed to the National Trust by Lady Binney, and is now open on Sundays from 2-5 and on week-

days (Tuesdays excepted) from 10-1 and 2-5.

It is to china-fanciers that the house especially appeals. If questioned as to the general quality of the contents I should point silently to the two Bow figures which in 1919, when money was money, cost £3,750 at Christie's. Among the pieces of foreign origin Kändler's Harlequins and accredited Comedians to the Royal Court of Saxony are outstanding, while the Meissen tea-pot (a grotesque likeness of a warrior, with helmet-lid and mock-heraldic features) would ornament the most allusive table. In fact I should recommend the visit, in fair weather or foul, as one of high curiosity.

Universal Genius

MR. YEHUDI MENUHIN was in London last week.

No slouch, where matters of art are in question, he interrogated a friend of mine about this summer's Rembrandt celebrations in Holland.

"Everything will be on show—paintings, drawings, etchings, documents . . ."

"Well," said Mr. Menuhin, "if you come across the manuscript of a violin concerto by Rembrandt, don't forget to drop me a line."

Jamaica's Boom

THE real estate and hotel boom in Jamaica continues apace and I hear that the Casa Blanca, which overlooks the famous Doctor's Cave bathing-beach and is the oldest hotel in Montego Bay, has just been sold to a Canadian and American syndicate for £500,000.

Private homes and estates continue to change hands at fabulous figures, not least because property in Jamaica is exempt from death duties.

The island is adjusting itself rapidly to boom status, but sometimes the purpose of imported whims is not immediately grasped. One new resident, discussing the building of a swimming-

pool, asked the local builder how often it would be necessary to change the water. "That Sir," said the builder, "is an impossible question. It depends entirely on how much soap you use."

Homo Freudianus

THE vis comica has been so notably lacking from the Freud centenary celebrations that it is almost with hesitation that I append to the solemn goings-on Jean Cocteau's impression of Freudian man.

Devoted will not that the Ego, in this double portrait,



FREUDIAN POSTSCRIPT

has the Id firmly in control. There is no hint of residuary tension in the subject's sprightly bearing.

Eheu Fugaces

THE truly ducal remark* is, alas, all too rare nowadays, so I am happy to report one which was recently let fall in Scotland.

Waiting for dinner in his castle, the Duke of — impatiently consulted his watch. It had stopped. Asking one of his guests for the time he complained "I can't understand it. My man usually winds the thing up before he puts it on me."